

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing secure access to a service on a service web server comprising:
  - (a) providing a first user access to a label service on a permission web server;
  - (b) allowing said first user to determine, using the label service, a label related to said service;
  - (c) creating a first permission link at said permission web server, wherein said first permission link comprises the label and a digital signature of the permission web server;
  - (d) providing said first permission link to said first user;
  - (e) receiving at the service web server from a second user a permission comprising the first permission link and a second permission link, wherein said second permission link is created by said first user and comprises a digital signature of the first user;
  - (f) verifying the digital signatures in the permission;
  - (g) providing the second user access to the service if an analysis of the permission produces a positive result.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said first user transmits said permission to said second user using electronic mail.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein said first user transmits said permission to said second user using instant messaging.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein said first user transmits said permission to said second user using a personal area network.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein said permission and service web servers are the same.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the first and second users are the same.
7. A method of providing secure access to a service on a service web server comprising:
  - (a) providing a first user access to a label service on a label web server;
  - (b) allowing said first user to determine, using the label service, a label related to said service;
  - (c) providing said label to said first user;
  - (d) receiving at the service web server from a second user a permission, wherein said permission is created by said first user and comprises a digital signature of the first user and the label;
  - (e) verifying the digital signature in the permission; and
  - (f) providing access to the service to the second user if an analysis of the permission produces a positive result.
8. The method of claim 7 further comprising:
  - (g) before step (f), verifying that the first user had authority to delegate access to the service.
9. The method of claim 8 wherein step (f) is performed using an access control list.
10. A method of providing secure access to a service on a service web server comprising:
  - (a) providing a first user access to a label service on a permission web server;
  - (b) allowing said first user to determine, using the label service, a label related to said service;
  - (c) creating a first permission link at said permission web server, wherein said first permission link comprises the label and a digital signature of the permission web server;

- (d) providing said first permission link to said first user;
- (e) receiving at the service web server from a subsequent user a subsequent permission, wherein said subsequent permission comprises the first permission link, a second permission link comprising a digital signature of the first user, and at least one intervening permission link comprising a digital signature of at least one intervening user;
- (f) verifying the digital signature of the permission web server, the digital signature of the first user and each digital signature of each intervening user in the subsequent permission; and
- (g) providing the subsequent user access to the service if an analysis of the subsequent permission produces a positive result.

11. The method of claim 1, 7, or 10 wherein the label comprises a URL for identifying the service.

12. A system for providing secure access to a service on a service web server comprising:

a permission web server that maintains a label service and allows a first user to determine, using the label service, a label related to the service; that creates a first permission link, wherein said first permission link comprises the label and a digital signature of the permission web server; and that provides the first permission link to the first user; and

the service web server that receives from a second user a permission comprising the first permission link and a second permission link, wherein said second permission link is created by said first user and comprises a digital signature of the first user; that verifies the digital signatures in the permission; and that provides the second user access to the service if an analysis of the permission produces a positive result.

13. A system for providing secure access to a service on a service web server comprising:  
a permission web server that maintains a label service and that allows a first user to determine, using the label service, a label related to the service; and that provides the label to the first user; and

the service web server that receives from a second user a permission, wherein said permission is created by the first user and comprises a digital signature of the first user and the label; that verifies the digital signature in the permission; and that provides the second user access to the service if an analysis of the permission produces a positive result.

14. A system for providing secure access to a service on a service web server comprising:  
a permission web server that maintains a label service and allows a first user to determine, using the label service, a label related to said service; that creates a first permission link, wherein the first permission link comprises the label and a digital signature of the permission web server; and that provides the first permission link to the first user; and

the service web server that receives from a subsequent user a subsequent permission, wherein said subsequent permission comprises the first permission link, a second permission link comprising a digital signature of the first user, and at least one intervening permission link comprising a digital signature of at least one intervening user; that verifies the digital signature of the permission web server, the digital signature of the first user and each digital signature of each intervening user in the subsequent permission; and that provides the subsequent user access to the service if an analysis of the subsequent permission produces a positive result.